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# INSTRUCTION

AND

# HINTS ON ROWING.



BY

*Samuel*  
S. W. BARNES,

MEMBER ISLAND CITY BOATING & ATHLETIC ASS'N,  
GALVESTON, TEXAS.

EX-MEMBER LONDON ROWING CLUB,  
ENGLAND.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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So often have I heard the question: "Where can I get a book that would teach me something about rowing?" that I determined to write a few suggestions to beginners, feeling confident that he who reads and follows out, with strict attention, what I have written, *may* develop into a good oarsman; and should success attend his efforts, my point will have been gained.

## CHAPTER I.

### ROWING ON STATIONARY SEAT.

Rowing must not be confounded with sculling. In rowing you use but one oar, or "sweep," and in sculling you use a pair of oars, properly called "sculls." I will write on the former subject, (rowing) first, and give points on sculling afterwards.

"What a splendid arm that man has ; just look at his biceps. Would he not make a good oarsman or boxer ?"

Such remark as the above, and I have heard it time and time again, indicates that the questioner is not well up in rowing or boxing, nor the anatomy of the body. For rowing, pick me out a man with big hips and broad, deep chest, and not necessarily big arms, because rowing should not be done with the biceps. One's back and legs should have the hardest work, and one's arms only used to finish the stroke. If a man's biceps have become large from continued use of dumb-bells, or clubs, or any other exercise, as a rule he will not make a good oarsman ; he will rely upon his biceps to do the work that should be done by his back and head. It is a fact that

one's biceps can be so enlarged that it becomes impossible to stretch out the arm at full length, and quickness and length of reach are lost for slowness and *unavailable* strength.

We will begin our rowing on a stationary seat ; and one should accustom one's self to row the port as well as starboard oar. Sit in the boat with your back perfectly straight and chest out. Round backs disfigure the boat. It is a mistake to think rowing will cause round shoulders, because if the chest be thrown out at the end of each and every stroke, this exercise alone would widen and deepen the chest and straighten the back. Hold your oar with both hands, letting the blade rest flat on the water. The hand furthest from the blade of the oar, being called the outside hand, should clasp the handle of the oar at the butt, just allowing the little finger to lap over the end of the oar, which will help to keep the oar well "home," or pressed against the oarlock. The inner hand — that is, the hand nearest the blade of the oar — should be separated from the outer hand about three or four inches, with the knuckles of this hand turned further over the handle of the oar, in order to assist in feathering the water. Now you have been given the position to sit in the boat, and how to hold your oar. In making your stroke you lower your hands, that is, drop them slightly towards your

lap, bending your wrists and so feathering your oar; push out your hands to the full extent of your arms, then let your body follow your arms until you are reaching out as far over your toes as you conveniently can ; the further you reach the greater the length of stroke. Your body at all times, must move straight up and down with the boat, and in reaching forward to make your stroke your hands will be nearer the side than the middle of the boat. Don't let your body follow them further than the straight up and down movement of the boat will admit. Avoid, however, over-reaching, as you will lose your steady balance and will not be able to catch the water strongest at the beginning of your stroke. Open your knees wide enough to admit of your stomach getting between them, raising your hands gradually as you have advanced them forward. The lowering and raising your hands is explained in this way: When you lower your hands, you necessarily raise the spoon or blade of the oar from the water and thus clear your oar of the water, and as you raise your hands when you are advancing to take your stroke, so you bring the blade of your oar nearer the water and ready to make your stroke. By watching this carefully you avoid rowing half a stroke in the air, a mistake often made. Do not begin to take your stroke until your oar is turned and

touching the water or you will be losing the most important part of the stroke and leave the other oarsmen in your boat to do the hardest work. The blade of your oar, on coming in contact with the water, should be a little past the perpendicular; that is, the upper part turned a little over forward; if it be turned backward, you will knife the water and get no resistance against your oar and row too deep. If you have followed me carefully you are supposed to be now reaching forward ready to make your stroke. You have gone as far forward as you conveniently can with your hands and body; you have turned your knuckles upward so that the blade is a little past the perpendicular and ready to take the water. As soon as your oar touches the water press your feet as hard as possible against your stretcher, throw your head well up and back, putting the whole weight of your body, from your waist upwards, including your head, on to your oar, then straighten your back and thus force your oar through the water with all the weight and force at your command, not bending your arms, however, until your body has become erect and slightly past the perpendicular, then pull in your hands until they nearly touch your body by bending your arms, and finish your stroke. By putting the whole weight of your body on the oar, including the weight of your



head, I mean pull from the small of your back, make that the leverage point; throw out your chest and you will avoid the fault of pulling with your arms only and thus losing one of the greatest points in rowing or sculling. The man who pulls with his arms only, stands no chance against a man who throws say 120 pounds (the weight of his body and head) on his oar every stroke he takes; besides, further, in throwing your head back it assists in helping to fill your lungs with plenty of air, and you are not so likely to lose your wind.

You have now finished your first stroke on a stationary seat. Drop your wrists and hands so as to commence feathering your oar and clear your oar of the water. Shoot out your hands quickly to the full extent of your arms, then follow along with your body, gradually raising your hands, and make your second stroke as you made your first. Watch all the points given and you will soon learn to row. The swinging of the body is done very much as if you were sitting in a rocking chair and wanted to rock; you do not move from your seat, but you let the weight of your body and head make the motive power. Be sure and catch the water at the furthest point you reach, and don't come back before you have hold on the water with your oar, and then pull it through, only putting the blade of the oar in

the water far enough just to cover the blade, and don't dig it deep under, or you will roll the boat.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ROWING ON SLIDING SEAT.

In recent years someone conceived the idea that if one could get nearer to one's work at the commencement of the stroke, (which is, as I have before remarked, the most important part of all the stroke,) that additional power on the oar, (not to mention more weight,) and a saving of strength would be gained, and thereby a quickening of time. Experience has proven this to be correct, and although the first race or two were rowed simply with greased stationary seats, modern inventions have added a sliding seat to the boat and no noted race on smooth water is now rowed except in sliding seat boats. Sit on your slide as you were taught to sit on your stationary seat, your back straight, chest out and oar resting on the water. Your feet are tied or fastened to your stretcher in order that you may, by the use of your toes, draw your body towards your feet. Commence your stroke by pushing out you hands beyond your knees, then commence sliding your body by the use of your feet. This is done by bending back your toes and

drawing yourself forward by the use of your feet, as they are tied to your stretcher, and bending your knees. Open your legs to admit of your body coming between them, and when you have come as far forward with your body as you can, your knees being outside your armpits, you turn the blade of the oar a little past the perpendicular to catch the water with the fullest amount of resistance, throw your head up and straighten your legs by kicking (as it were) off from your stretcher, straighten your back and finish your stroke, after your body has slightly passed the perpendicular, by bending your arms and bringing your hands up to your body just below the chest. You commence the second stroke immediately on finishing the first; that is, when your body has passed the perpendicular in your first stroke, your hands drawn up to your body, then immediately force out your hands again without a second's delay until they have passed your knees, and don't begin to slide forward until then, for if you commence to slide before your hands are past your knees you will find that your knees are in the way of your hands and you will be obliged to straighten your legs again; that is, to go back on your slide to admit of your hands passing over your knees. The quickest part of your stroke should be the finish of one stroke and the forward movement of your hands

for the next, because you are all leaning back on your seats at the finishing of a stroke ; the weight that is in the boat is thus thrown forward, dipping the nose down in the water and stopping thereby the way on your boat that you have made by the first part of your stroke. This is a very common fault, and I consider much good work lost thereby. If there be any pause (and it should be hardly perceptible) while rowing the boat, it would be better that it be made, not at the finish of a stroke, but just as your oar is about to be pulled through the water, and you brace yourself to make the supreme effort of trying to lift your boat along. When your hands have come as close to your body at the finish of your stroke as you can get them without touching your body, you should then lower your wrists and hands, commencing to feather your oar, and thus clear it of any wave that may have been caused by the man rowing behind you. If this were more generally attended to less "crabbing" would be done, as "crabs" are nearly all caught at the finish of a stroke. Feather your oar from one to one and one-half inches above the water. Use most of your strength on the beginning of your stroke, lifting, as it were, your boat out of the water by putting your weight on your oar and stretcher.

To better illustrate this I will use the expres-

sion of a noted professional oarsman : "Young man, when you commence your stroke your weight should be all on your oar and stretcher, so that if you were sitting on eggs your weight would not break a single one of them. That's how to lift your boat." Watch your stroke oar and follow the time set by him. In nearly all boats you can see enough of the stroke oar to get your time and movements from him. This, I think, is preferable to watching the man immediately in front of you, for this reason: Supposing you were rowing in an eight-oared boat, and number seven, or port stroke, was a little slow, would this not necessarily make number six and the balance of the boat slower than the stroke? Whereas if you were all watching the stroke oar, one alone might be slow and all the rest on time. Some recommend watching the back of the neck of the man in front of you in preference to watching the stroke, as it causes you to keep your head up. Never look out of the boat nor down at your feet, for you gain nothing by so doing. In feathering your oar avoid dragging it on the top of the water. The blade of the oar should be from one to two inches above the surface of the water, and highest when you bring your hands forward, and as you get the blade of the oar backward get nearer the water, so as to avoid rowing

in the air. Do not come forward on your slide with a jerk, as the weight of your body will, by being thrown forward, stop your boat. The sliding part of your movement should be done easily, smoothly and not abruptly. This is a very important thing to learn, as I have seen some come forward in their slide with so much force as to nearly stop the way on their boat. In starting you take two short strokes to get way on your boat. After that you should row the usual length of stroke. Do not finish your stroke with a jerk, for if you should all jerk, as I have seen some do at the end of the stroke, your boat would be sunk that much deeper into the water and the way on your boat stopped. Don't talk while you are rowing. Save your wind for the finish. Never row straight head-on for the landing; always come up along side. Let one man get out of the boat at a time and let the captain of the crew tell each man when to get out.

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### CHAPTER III.

### SCULLING.

In the two previous chapters, under the head of rowing, I have confined my instruction to rowing with one oar, or sweep, and as the actions in sculling are very similar, I will be more brief

in my description of the movements of the body, taking it for granted that both should be done in the same way. It is harder to scull well than to row well, because you have two sculls to watch and work instead of one oar. You sit in the center of your sliding seat or stationary one, which ever it may be, keeping your sculls firmly clasped in your hands, resting the blades on the water, and so using them as a balancing pole, as it were, for in fact they regulate the riding of the boat on the water. Advance your hands first past your knees; then bring up your slide by bending your knees, not, however, opening them as in rowing, as you should keep your knees closed when sculling on a sliding seat; reach as far out with both your hands as you can, until they are nearly over the sides of the boat, then catch the water with your sculls, straighten your legs, throw up your head and the weight of your body on your sculls and pull through your stroke to a finish as fast as you can. You should keep your left hand over the right when the sculls overlap each other, which is the correct way to have them, as most men are stronger with the right hand than left, and it thus gives the right hand most to do in the way of balancing the boat. The starboard outrigger, that is the outrigger that holds the scull you are using with your left hand, should be about two inches higher than

the other so as to give your left hand a chance to be pulled over the right without knocking against each other. By raising your right hand when your scull is in the water, you thus raise the port side of the boat, and by pressing it down you, on the contrary, bear down that side of the boat. Swing straight up and down your boat and so keep its even keel on the water. Row a very slow stroke at first, so as to get accustomed to handling your sculls freely, and afterwards you may increase the number of strokes to the minute as you advance in proficiency. Try and keep your back straight at all times, as it will help you to learn to row from the small of your back and get the weight of your shoulders and head on your sculls, besides adding very materially to the looks of your boat. You should sit in your boat as straight as if you were sitting in your saddle on horseback, and by learning this at first it will be the easiest position for you to sit in afterwards.

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## REMARKS.

Much could be written about the benefit to be derived from the healthful exercise of rowing, and perhaps, next to sparing, it uses more muscles of the body than any other of the athletic sports. Both arms, both legs, the feet, back and



head are all used, and anyone with weak legs, arms or back will find it to their advantage to do some rowing. After any hard rowing take a rough towel and rub yourself down for three or four minutes, then a cold bath would be very agreeable to most people. It does not, however, suit everyone. Don't stand in a draught to cool off, and don't drink ice water immediately after hard exercise.

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Galveston, Texas, May 28, 1891.

MR. S. W. BARNES, City :

Dear Sir : Having read your book "Instruction and Hints on Rowing," I can recommend it to all persons wishing to acquire a proper knowledge of this branch of athletic sports. Beginners in rowing, if not properly instructed, almost invariably fall into bad habits which they will find great trouble in overcoming. If the instructions which are laid down in your book are carefully followed, it will be a very easy matter to become a good oarsman. This is the only book I have ever read where the principles of rowing are laid down in such a concise and simple manner that the ideas can be grasped by anyone, and trust that it will meet with the success which it merits. Yours truly,

R. P. ALLEN.

Galveston, Texas, June 1, 1891.

S. W. BARNES, ESQ., City :

Dear Sir : I have carefully read your valuable treatises on the art of Rowing and Sculling, and consider it one of the best expositions of this health-giving exercise I ever saw in print. A strict adherence to your valuable instructions will ultimately lead to perfect oarsmanship, and with the necessary physical capacity, to perfect health. You have filled a void long wanted, and are deserving of the praise of those who are desirous of becoming first-class oarsmen.

Place it in a conspicuous part of your boat-house.

Respectfully yours,

JOHN CROTTY,

Champion Oarsman of the State of Texas.



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